



Office of the Bishop

September 18, 2020

**TO:** Pastors, Priests and Parish Staffs of San Diego County

**FROM:** Bishop McElroy *DM*

**RE:** Use of Parish space for Non-Liturgical Gatherings

Yesterday the Presbyteral Council had a long discussion about what types of non-liturgical gatherings should be permitted in parish plants during this time of pandemic. Our discussion fully recognized that San Diego County may shift to a more restrictive set of guidelines if we move from the red category to the purple category of alert. We were also attentive to the issues of cleanup after uses, especially in the evening and the need not to overburden parish staffs. With this in mind, we agreed that for the present moment:

1. Priority should be given to catechetical and formational uses, as well as prayer groups.
2. There will be no social activities.
3. Gatherings must not extend beyond one and one half hours.
4. There can be no use of school classrooms by groups other than the schools because of the enormous importance of limiting cross-contamination.

Beyond these rules, pastors in collaboration with their parish staffs should decide what gatherings to allow during this period. It is of course mandatory in every gathering that social distancing and masking be strictly observed, along with the safety steps included on the attached county guidelines.

This is a moment when we can take another step toward pastoral normalcy. And it is especially important that in doing so we observe all of the protocols that have been essential in protecting our people.

I cannot thank you all sufficiently for the dedication, patience, faith and creativity that you have exhibited during these past months. They have been a great grace for your people and a great service to God.